

New Office Increases ATFA Visibility and Service to Members

By **KIM G. NIX**, Editor

Just over a year ago the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association was operating out of James and Joan Malone's house. While their home office afforded several advantages, it left a little to be desired. There was not enough growing room and space for equipment and seating for visitors was limited. Then, one day, fate stepped in.

Dr. Mark Foley, the president of the University of Mobile, was in attendance at an ATFA meeting. Because the University owns forestland, he was interested in learning more about how to manage it. In addition, the Harrigan Forest Resources Center is located on the University campus. At the meeting he became very interested in the ATFA. He felt that the mission statement of the organization matched up perfectly with what the University was trying to accomplish with the Harrigan Center. Based on this, he offered office space to the ATFA. The presence of the ATFA, Dr. Foley said, would lend credibility to the Harrigan Center and the University.



In June of 2000, the ATFA moved into their new offices at the Harrigan Center. ATFA staff members say the new office allows them to serve their members better. In addition to having more room for office equipment, "We can offer meeting

and classroom space," says James Malone. "Our credibility has also expanded by having an office that people can visit and see."

The office has also created an opportunity for Alabama and the ATFA to play a greater role in the establishment of the National Network of Private Forest Landowners. The office serves as the national headquarters for that organization (see article on page 10).

The Dwight Harrigan Forest Learning Center sits on 125 acres of forestland on the University of Mobile campus. The instructional building, where the ATFA office is located, contains several meeting rooms that can provide accommodations for a wide range of programs and activities. Situated nearby are walking trails and the Albert S. Dix Rock and Mineral Museum. The mission of the Harrigan Center is "to produce properly informed advocates of the economic, recreational, and environmental importance of America's forests and related resources such as soil, water and wildlife."

Since its construction in the early 1990s, the Harrigan Center has been used as a teaching tool. Many classrooms from the Mobile County School System have made field trips to learn about forestry and natural resources. The center was developed through a cooperative effort between the Alabama Forest Resources Center, the Mobile County Public School System and the University of Mobile. Many individuals, organizations and forest industries contributed funds to help build the Harrigan Center.

To date, thousands have visited the Harrigan Center to learn more about Alabama's forests through classroom instruction and outdoor education. With the addition of the ATFA office, the center is expanding its teaching tools to an even wider audience. ♣



Staff Members Patty Johnston, Joan Malone and James Malone outside the ATFA office on the campus of the University of Mobile.

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